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Congressional briefings

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RNR92
MID AST - NIXON

BY RALPH HARRIS

WASHINGTON, OCT. 10, REUTER - PRESIDENT NIXON TOLD CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS TODAY THAT THE NEW ARAB-ISRAELI WAR WAS LIKELY TO BE A LONG HARD STRUGGLE WITH NO DECISIVE TURNING POINT YET IN SIGHT.

NIXON GAVE THIS SOMBER ASSESSMENT AT A WHITE HOUSE MEETING AT WHICH DEMOCRATIC AND REPUBLICAN CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS VOICED THEIR SUPPORT FOR U.S. EFFORTS TO BRING ABOUT A CEASEFIRE AND LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR EVENTUAL PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

THE CONGRESSMEN REPORTED THAT THE PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY OF STATE HENRY KISSINGER, WHO ALSO ATTENDED THE MEETING, WERE EXTREMELY SERIOUS AS THEY EXPLAINED THE LATEST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS, CEASEFIRE MOVES IN THE UNITED NATIONS, AND U.S. CONTACTS WITH THE SOVIET UNION TO REDUCE THE RISK OF A BIG-POWER CONFRONTATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

SENATE DEMOCRATIC LEADER MIKE MANSFIELD OF MONTANA TOLD REPORTERS THAT THE PRESIDENT AND KISSINGER CLEARLY INDICATED THE CONFLICT WOULD NOT BE ANOTHER SIX-DAY WAR, A REFERENCE TO THE WAR OF 1967 WHEN ISRAEL WON A LIGHTNING VICTORY OVER THE ARABS. THE FIGHTING IS NOW IN ITS FIFTH DAY.

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MIDEAST - NIXON 2 WASHINGTON :

THE OPPOSITION DEMOCRATIC LEADERS, WHO OFTEN ARE CALLED WITH REPUBLICANS TO THE WHITE HOUSE IN A GROUP TO BE INFORMED OF PRESIDENTIAL DECISIONS OR AN IMPENDING NATIONAL SECURITY EMERGENCY, SAID TODAY'S MEETING WAS CALLED CHIEFLY TO PUT THEM IN THE PICTURE AND BRIEF THEM ON THE MILITARY SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND DIPLOMATIC DEVELOPMENTS.

MANSFIELD STRUCK A BIPARTISAN NOTE WHEN HE SAID THAT "WE ARE UNANIMOUSLY BEHIND THE POSITION BEING UNDERTAKEN BY THE PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY KISSINGER TO BRING ABOUT A CEASEFIRE AND A SETTLEMENT."

THE UNITED STATES, AT THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL ON MONDAY, PROPOSED A CEASEFIRE WITH A RETURN OF FORCES TO THE 1967 CEASEFIRE LINES, WHICH SAW ISRAEL IN CONTROL OF THE EGYPTIAN SINAI AND THE GOLAN HEIGHTS IN SYRIA.

THE CONGRESSMEN APPEARED RELUCTANT TO REVEAL WHETHER THE PRESIDENT HAD INDICATED THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS PREPARING TO SEND MORE MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO ISRAEL, ESPECIALLY FIGHTER-BOMBERS, TO REPLACE ISRAELI LOSSES.

MORE WRM/BC1120

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RNR94

MID AST - NIXON, WASHINGTON :

SPEAKING OF U.S. MILITARY AID TO ISRAEL, MANSFIELD SAID: "I ASSUME THAT MATTER IS ALWAYS UNDER ADVISEMENT." HE AND OTHER CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS REFUSED TO ELABORATE.

THE UNITED STATES HAS PLEDGED IN THE PAST THAT IT WOULD NOT PERMIT THE MILITARY BALANCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST TO SWING AGAINST ISRAEL, BUT DIPLOMATIC OBSERVERS SUGGESTED THAT AN OPEN DISCUSSION OF RENEWED AMERICAN ARMS SHIPMENTS TO ISRAEL MIGHT TRIGGER AN ARAB OIL BOYCOTT.

SENATOR WILLIAM FULBRIGHT (D-ARK.), CHAIRMAN OF THE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE, WHO SUPPORTS ARAB DEMANDS FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF ISRAEL FROM TERRITORY OCCUPIED IN 1967, APPLAUDED THE ADMINISTRATION, SAYING HE THOUGHT THE PRESIDENT WAS MAKING A GENUINE EFFORT TO BRING ABOUT A CEASEFIRE AND TO LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR A PERMANENT SETTLEMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

REP. CARL ALBERT OF OKLAHOMA, SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE SAID: "THE PRESIDENT AND DR. KISSINGER EXPRESSED THE HOPE -- WHICH WE SHARE -- THAT THE FIGHTING WILL SOON COME TO AN END AND THE LONG-TIME PROBLEMS OF THE MIDDLE EAST, WHICH THREATEN PEACE, MAY BE SOLVED."

THE CONGRESSMEN QUOTED THE PRESIDENT AND DR. KISSINGER AS SAYING THE UNITED STATES WAS MAINTAINING CLOSE CONTACTS WITH THE BELLICERENTS AND OTHER INTERESTED POWERS, INCLUDING THE SOVIET UNION.
REUTER WRM/BO11257